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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000428

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN ELECTION CHRONICLES FOR JUNE 30:
MOVING FORWARD WITH THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 423

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4

11. (C) The Contact Group met the afternoon of June 29. AU Ambassador Annadif said that, despite previous confidence expressed by Prime Minister Laghdaf, the three parties had not yet been able to reach agreement concerning the civil society members of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and had asked to meet with the ICG. Annadif also reported that the three minor candidates in the earlier planned June 6 election -- Kane Hamedou Baba, Ibrahima Sarr and Sghair Ould M'Bareck, had demarched him to complain that they had been disadvantaged by the pause in the election process from June 6 to July 18 -- having already spent most of their funding in the earlier round. They asked that the ICG in some way reimburse their earlier expenses to give them an equal chance. Charge noted this seemed a "very Mauritanian" request noting that the candidates were in some way advantaged by having had more time to campaign including, for a few, the chance to campaign abroad. Others took the concern more seriously and wondered whether the GNU could reimburse at least some of the earlier expenses. Charge noted that might set the precedent for reimbursing Aziz' earlier costs and it was generally accepted the GNU route would never win consensus. The EC and UN reps steered well clear of providing any direct assistance to any of the candidates.

12. (C) Maouloud complains about the HSC communique: The morning of the 30th, the FNDD's Maouloud complained to Annadif and ICG about the Superior National Defense Council's (former High State Council) communique, stressing that it was political and that it had not used the wording agreed upon in Dakar (Ref A). Annadif used a very condescending tone with Maouloud and stated there was nothing he could do. PolOff highlighted that four days of intense high-level negotiations in Dakar had been necessary to agree on acceptable wording for both parties and that it was appalling that the HSC had dismissed these efforts by not publishing the consensual press release adopted in Dakar. Annadif said, without much conviction, that he would bring it up with the interim President of the Republic.

13. (C) CENI selection process: PolOff attended meetings in the evening of June 29 and the morning of June 30 to assist the majority (Charge was involved in a memorial service for

deceased American Chris Leggett and a subsequent security meeting), the FNDD and the RFD in consensually choosing three civil society members to serve as National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) president, vice president and consensual civil society member. Note: According to the Dakar Accord, each party to the crisis submits four members and the three parties consensually choose the president, vice president and an extra member.) General Aziz's representative Ould Horma struck a discordant note from the beginning by saying his camp wanted to keep current CENI president and vice-president because, from a technical point of view, it would disrupt CENI operations to change these key positions at the last minute. He also advanced that his camp should be entitled to naming the president and vice president because the opposition was naming eight CENI members whereas the majority only had four. For the FNDD and RFD, this proposal is unacceptable because the individuals leading CENI, though reputed and competent, agreed to participate in legitimizing the coup through unilateral elections. They insisted there were other competent people who they would be willing to consider. Annadif tried to convince the FNDD and RFD to change their position. PolOff noted that the Dakar Accord calls for CENI leadership "that can't be contested by any of the three poles," that the RFD and FNDD had sufficiently established their reservations concerning current CENI leadership and that the group should work with Aziz's camp to find other acceptable candidates. In the spirit of consensus, mediator Annadif asked the three parties to draft a list of ten acceptable names each to then focus on choosing names common to the three lists. Horma, after

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spending almost thirty minutes outside the room consulting with someone on the phone, rejected this method and requested that Annadif consults with civil society to get candidate names, arguing that the FNDD and RFD could introduce "political" and partial candidates. Annadif ended the meeting by dismissing Horma's request as being too time consuming and asking the three parties to bring a list of acceptable candidates the next day.

14. (C) CENI selection process continued: General Aziz's representative Ould Horma opened the June 30 meeting with exactly the same position he had the previous evening. The FNDD and RFD provided a common list of candidates. PolOff, instructed by Charge, pointed out that General Aziz had stated the CENI composition was not a huge issue for him and that we did not understand why it had suddenly become problematic. She also expressed, in response to Horma's claim that the majority was entitled to naming the president and vice president, that one could argue from a check and balances perspective they did not because they already controlled fifty percent of the government and the Prime Minister. Annadif asked the Mauritians to step outside and pushed back on PolOff's comments saying they were obstructionist. PolOff noted Horma was being obstructionist by insisting on keeping an unreasonable position contrary to the Accord, delaying the formation of CENI, trying to change the rules of the game at the last minute, and refusing to comply with Annadif's simple request to submit ten names. Horma was brought back in the room and Annadif asked him to please comply and propose the names, which he originally refused. In meetings with the FNDD and RFD, Annadif tried several other options -- for instance letting the Aziz camp name the President while they name the other two members. Maouloud pushed back emphatically saying that the CENI was the only lever of balance available given an Interim President that had cooperated with the HSC, Aziz's former Prime Minister still in power, an effective minority in the Council of Ministers, and a group of governors named by Aziz.

Moine caught the ICG's attentions noting that, while everyone now is resolved to accepting the July 18 election date, further delays in seating the CENI would necessarily cause technical delays pushing that date back. Finally, it was agreed that the ICG would follow a proposal put forward by Maouloud that, failing consensus on the three civil

society members, Annadiff would ask the Prime Minister to confirm the CENI members that had already been submitted by the three parties so the CENI could start work and leave the president and vice president question pending for further consideration. Horma said he would do his best to get a list of ten names so the three civil society members could be resolved.

15. (C) Other Issues: Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall has registered his candidacy apparently with documentation showing he has resigned -- causing the Aziz camp to already say the resignation is irregular because it would have had to have been routed through and approved by the military High Command. It is understood that Vall secured written acceptance of his resignation by President Abdallahi during a visit he made to Lemden a few months ago. The issue will certainly go to the Constitutional Council for decision. Charge highlighted to Annadiff that the issue was potentially serious since there were divided loyalties between Aziz and Vall within the various military and security forces that could be aggravated no matter how the Council decides.

HANKINS